



# Completing Sections E and F of the Foothills Parkway



**Above:** Aerial view of the “Missing Link” on Section E of the Foothills Parkway (Photo courtesy of Lane Construction)

**Right:** Pumping concrete on the deck of Bridge (NPS Photo)

**Project Description.** Congress authorized the Foothills Parkway as a scenic parkway on February 22, 1944. Of the seven congressionally mandated parkways, the Foothills Parkway is the only remaining parkway yet to be completed.

The entire 72-mile corridor is administered by Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Only three of eight segments are completed and open to the public, totaling 22.5 miles.

The National Park Service (NPS), Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT), and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) are currently seeking funding to pave and open an additional 16.1 miles known as Sections E and F.

**Background.** Between 1966 and 1970, a 6.4-mile section of road between U.S. Highway 321 in Walland and Carr Creek was constructed (Section F). In the 1980s, two contracts were awarded for construction of approximately 10 miles of road between Carr Creek and Wears Valley (Section E). Both projects experienced structural fill failures and erosion problems that caused the projects to be suspended in 1989, leaving a 1.65-mile segment uncompleted. The uncompleted section is often referred to as the “missing link.”

In the 1990s, a new design was developed by the FHWA to complete the “missing link” using bridges, walls, and fills to minimize surface disturbance and environmental impacts. Completion of the “missing link” is possible by 2018 with appropriate funding.

**Current Status.** Since early 2000, the NPS and FHWA have worked together to develop a plan to complete the “missing link.” As of March 2016, four bridges and two road segments have been completed at a cost of \$46.2 million.

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## Mega-Project\* Profile: The Foothills Parkway

Estimated cost: \$35 million  
(estimated)

Percentage of the Southeast  
Region (SER) FLTP  
Annual Allotment: 90%

Percentage of NPS FLTP  
Annual Allotment: 20%

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Bridge 3





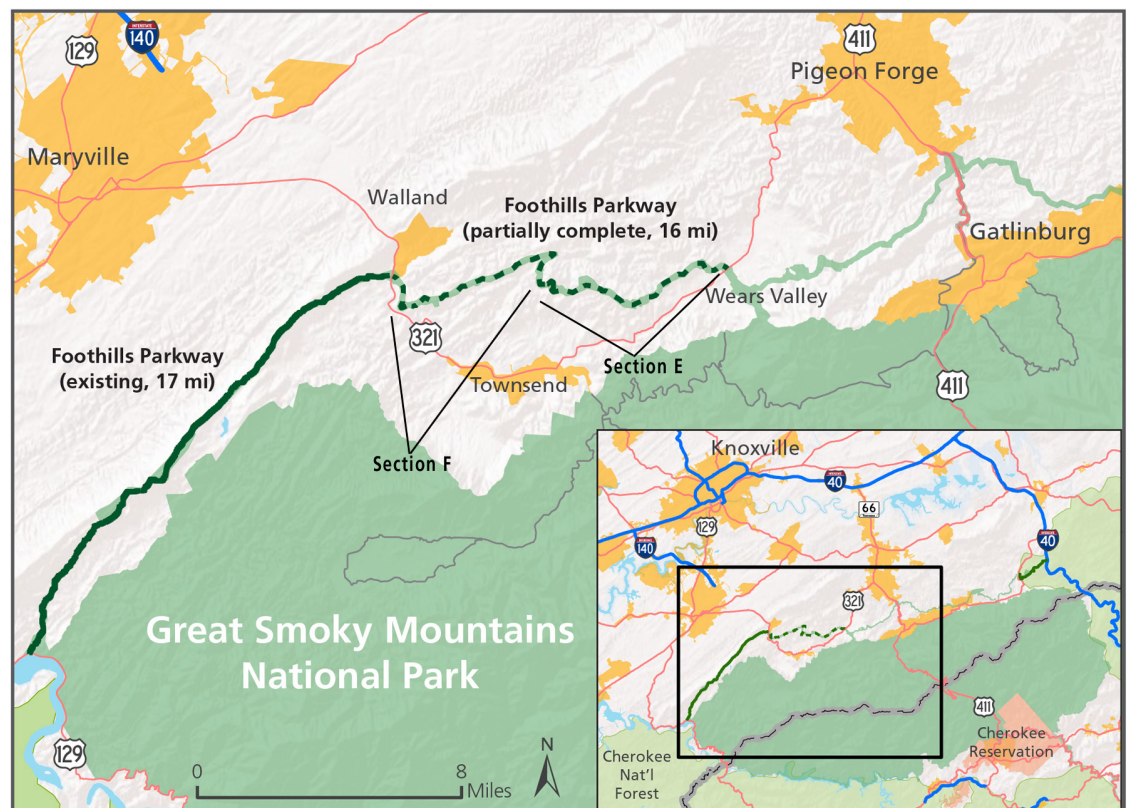
Above: Formwork for the column at the center of Bridge 4 is prepared for placement of concrete (NPS Photo)

Less than one mile of the original 1.65 miles of the “missing link” remains unfinished. Bridge 2 (FOOT 8E17) was completed in December 2012, at a cost of \$24.7 million, funded by Title 23, American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The remaining sections of the “missing link” were combined under one contract in an attempt to complete construction by 2017.

Funding for this project has come from Title 23, American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, FLTP, TEA-21 Earmarks and SAFETEA-LU earmarks. The total construction award to date is \$48.4 million. Currently this project is about 80% complete.

**Future Funding.** Since 1966, \$146 Million has been invested in Foothills Parkway Sections E and F. The funding required for full completion of these sections is estimated at an additional \$35 million. This will complete the paving and miscellaneous work to open the entire 16 miles (Sections E and F) from Wears Valley to Walland, TN.

--- Project limits      — Foothills Parkway



\* Mega Projects: The NPS transportation system is supported, in part, by funds from the Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP). Currently, the NPS is authorized an annual budget of \$268 million from the FLTP. These funds are apportioned by formula among the seven NPS Regions. Most of these funds are used for “transportation asset management” – that is, to pay for the work required to keep existing assets in good condition. There are some projects, such as a major bridge repair or ship replacement, that require a much larger amount of funding than is available on an annual basis to a Region. These we call “Mega Projects.” The NPS is pursuing strategies to fund these projects.